

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

- 1        1. A method comprising:
  - 2        obtaining a set of locations in a storage area; and
  - 3        performing an operation on first data in the set of locations in the storage area, wherein
    - 4            the storage area comprises an unspecified location storing second data,
    - 5            the unspecified location is not included in the set of locations, and
    - 6            the second data are unaffected by the operation.
  
- 1        2. The method of claim 1 wherein  
2        the operation is replication.
  
- 1        3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
  - 2        obtaining a set of entities, wherein
    - 3            the set of locations comprises a plurality of subsets of locations, and
    - 4            each entity in the set of entities has permission to perform the operation on respective data in at least one of the plurality of subsets of locations.
  
- 1        4. The method of claim 1 wherein  
2        the set of locations is designated by a requester, and  
3        the requester requests to perform the operation on the first data in the set of locations.
  
- 1        5. The method of claim 4 further comprising:
  - 2        obtaining a designation of the operation to be performed on the set of locations.
  
- 1        6. The method of claim 4 wherein  
2        the requester manages data in the storage area.
  
- 1        7. The method of claim 4 wherein  
2        the requester performs a management function of a set of management functions for the  
3        storage area.
  
- 1        8. The method of claim 4 wherein  
2        the requester identifies a respective physical location in the storage area corresponding to  
3        each location of the set of locations.
  
- 1        9. The method of claim 4 wherein  
2        each location in the set of locations comprises

3           a beginning location and  
4           a number of contiguous locations starting at the beginning location.

1           10. The method of claim 4 wherein  
2       the set of locations is a subset of a plurality of locations, and  
3       the set of locations is designated by a set of indicators, wherein  
4           the set of indicators comprises an indicator for each respective location of the  
5           plurality of locations, and  
6           each indicator of the set of indicators indicates whether the respective location for the  
7           indicator is included in the set of locations.

1           11. The method of claim 4 further comprising:  
2       obtaining a second set of locations; and  
3       performing a second operation on the second set of locations after the first operation is  
4           performed on the set of locations.

1           12. The method of claim 11 wherein  
2       the set of locations and the second set of locations are designated by the requester; and  
3       the operation and the second operation are designated by the requester.

1           13. The method of claim 4 wherein  
2       a sieve for the storage area comprises the operation, and  
3       each operation in the sieve is performed on the set of locations if the sieve is specified.

1           14. A system comprising:  
2       obtaining means for obtaining a set of locations in a storage area; and  
3       performing means for performing an operation on first data in the set of locations in the  
4           storage area, wherein  
5           the storage area comprises an unspecified location storing second data,  
6           the unspecified location is not included in the set of locations, and  
7           the second data are unaffected by the operation.

1           15. The system of claim 14 further comprising:  
2       second obtaining means for obtaining a set of entities, wherein  
3           the set of locations comprises a plurality of subsets of locations, and  
4           each entity in the set of entities has permission to perform the operation on respective  
5           data in at least one of the plurality of subsets of locations.

1        16. The system of claim 14 wherein  
2        the set of locations is designated by a requester, and  
3        the requester requests to perform the operation on the first data in the set of locations.

1        17. The system of claim 16 further comprising:  
2        second obtaining means for obtaining a second set of locations; and  
3        second performing means for performing a second operation on the second set of locations  
4                  after the first operation is performed on the set of locations.

1        18. A computer-readable medium comprising:  
2        obtaining instructions configured to obtain a set of locations in a storage area; and  
3        performing instructions configured to perform an operation on first data in the set of locations  
4                  in the storage area, wherein  
5                  the storage area comprises an unspecified location storing second data,  
6                  the unspecified location is not included in the set of locations, and  
7                  the second data are unaffected by the operation.

1        19. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 further comprising:  
2        second obtaining instructions configured to obtain a set of entities, wherein  
3                  the set of locations comprises a plurality of subsets of locations, and  
4                  each entity in the set of entities has permission to perform the operation on respective  
5                  data in at least one of the plurality of subsets of locations.

1        20. The computer-readable medium of claim 18 wherein  
2        the set of locations is designated by a requester, and  
3        the requester requests to perform the operation on the first data in the set of locations.

1        21. The computer-readable medium of claim 20 further comprising:  
2        second obtaining instructions configured to obtain a second set of locations; and  
3        second performing instructions configured to perform a second operation on the second set of  
4                  locations after the first operation is performed on the set of locations.

1        22. A computer system comprising:  
2        a processor; and  
3        the computer-readable medium of claim 18, wherein  
4                  the computer-readable medium is coupled to the processor.

1           23. A system comprising:

2       an obtaining module configured to obtain a set of locations in a storage area; and

3       a performing module configured to perform an operation on first data in the set of locations in  
4           the storage area, wherein

5           the storage area comprises an unspecified location storing second data,

6           the unspecified location is not included in the set of locations, and

7           the second data are unaffected by the operation.

1           24. The system of claim 23 further comprising:

2       a second obtaining module configured to obtain a set of entities, wherein

3           the set of locations comprises a plurality of subsets of locations, and

4           each entity in the set of entities has permission to perform the operation on respective  
5           data in at least one of the plurality of subsets of locations.

1           25. The system of claim 23 wherein

2       the set of locations is designated by a requester, and

3       the requester requests to perform the operation on the first data in the set of locations.

1           26. The system of claim 25 further comprising:

2       a second obtaining module configured to obtain a second set of locations; and

3       a second performing module configured to perform a second operation on the second set of  
4           locations after the first operation is performed on the set of locations.